



Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta

Who's Who in Alberta's Child Care System

Understanding Government, Decision-Making, and
Your Role as an Early Childhood Educator in Alberta

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A note on terminology: Throughout this resource, you will see both *child care* and *childcare*. AECEA uses *child care* as two words in keeping with our established style, while *childcare* is used when referring to official Government of Alberta names, titles, or programs.

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta (AECEA) created this guide as a general educational resource, with input from its partners in Childcare Policy within the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Education and Childcare to help early childhood educators understand Alberta's government structure and early learning and child care (ELCC) decision-making processes. This guide is not an official Government of Alberta publication. Government structures, programs, agreements, responsibilities, and contact information may change. For current information, consult official Government of Alberta and Government of Canada sources.

Why This Matters

Alberta's Ministry of Education and Childcare plays a central role in the early learning and child care system. The ministry is responsible for areas that directly affect early childhood educators and the programs in which they work, including licensing, educator certification, funding, affordability initiatives, and workforce supports.

The Government of Alberta identifies affordable, accessible, inclusive, and high-quality early learning and child care as important goals for Alberta's child care system, with a focus on supporting children's well-being and families.

Within this mandate, the ministry's work related to child care includes increasing access to affordable, quality, safe, and inclusive child care, as well as supporting the quality of licensed child care through workforce initiatives aimed at recruiting, retaining, and supporting skilled early childhood educators.

Understanding how the ministry is organized, how decisions are made, and which levels of government are involved can help early childhood educators understand where policies and programs come from, where to go with questions, and the different ways they can participate in conversations about their profession and sector.

Understanding Change

In May 2025, responsibility for child care moved to Alberta's Ministry of Education, which was renamed to the Ministry of Education and Childcare.

Even when the name changes, the same basic responsibilities continue: licensing centres, setting standards, monitoring compliance, and supporting the workforce.

So, rather than remembering names, remember roles — who sets direction, who manages programs, and who you can reach out to.

The Two Sides of the Ministry

Every ministry has two main parts:

1. The Minister

- The [Minister of Education and Childcare](#) is an elected [Member of the Legislative Assembly \(MLA\)](#).
- The minister is part of Cabinet and is responsible for advancing the government's direction for early learning and child care, including funding models, affordability goals, and workforce priorities.
- Ministers change when there's an election or Cabinet shuffle.

2. The Public Service

- The [deputy minister](#) and their staff are public service employees (non-partisan employees).
- They oversee ministry operations, support policy development, and lead the implementation of government programs, funding, and regulations.
- The deputy minister is responsible for ensuring all aspects of their respective ministry meet the priorities, goals, and objectives of the Government of Alberta.

How the Ministry Is Organized

The names and divisions may change, but the basic structure for the Ministry of Education and Childcare looks like this:

Minister of Education and Childcare



Deputy Minister (senior public service employee)



Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs)

- Childcare Strategy and Policy
- Childcare Delivery



Executive Directors & Directors

- Childcare Transformation (strategic policy)
 - Bilateral agreement negotiations and reporting
- Childcare Policy (legislative and program policy)
 - ECE certification
 - Workforce initiatives
- Childcare Administration
 - Funding & grants (including Affordability Grants, subsidy, professional development, and wage top-ups)
- Childcare Licensing
 - Licensing and monitoring



Licensing Officers

- Support and monitor licensed programs

These layers ensure that government decisions are developed, reviewed, and delivered across the province.

Who Does What in Alberta

Level	What They Do	Why It Matters to Educators
Minister	Responsible for all aspects of the business of a specific government ministry. Responsible to fulfill the mandate given to them by the government to develop policies and programs that best serve Albertans and maximize ministry funds.	The minister's priorities influence funding, affordability programs, and new initiatives.
Deputy Minister (DM)	Supports the minister and oversees the day-to-day operations of the ministry.	The DM provides expert, non-partisan advice to the minister on policy issues and leads the implementation of the ministry's programs and policies, working to ensure they are delivered efficiently.
Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs)	Lead specific areas, such as Childcare Strategy and Policy or Childcare Delivery.	ADMs support the deputy minister and are responsible for operational management within their divisions, translating government and ministerial priorities into programs and policies that guide early childhood educators' work.
Executive Directors & Directors	Responsible for the strategic direction, operational management and policy implementation of a government branch.	Implement programs that affect ECE funding, standards, and workforce initiatives.
Licensing Officers	Work directly with licensed programs, ensuring they meet	Collaborate with programs to promote understanding of the Early

Level	What They Do	Why It Matters to Educators
	provincial safety and quality standards by licensing, monitoring and investigating them.	<i>Learning and Child Care Act</i> , <i>Regulation</i> , and <i>Family Day Home Standards</i> , provide resources and address issues through various means, including enforcement actions.
Childcare Staff Certification Office	Assesses and issues certifications for staff in licensed child care programs across Alberta.	Determines eligibility and assesses credentials to determine level of certification for all three levels of early childhood educators required to work in licensed programs in Alberta.

Government's Role in Child Care

Early learning and child care in Canada is a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial governments.

The Federal Government

- The governments of Canada and Alberta work together through federal–provincial early learning and child care agreements. These agreements provide federal funding to support shared priorities related to affordability, accessibility, quality, inclusion, and the early childhood educator workforce. Agreements are renewed or updated periodically, so funding commitments and priorities may change over time.
- Provides funding to provinces and territories through the [*Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreements*](#).
- Sets national goals, such as making child care more affordable, expanding access, and supporting the workforce.
- Tracks progress and works with provinces to ensure funding delivers results for families and educators.
- Does not directly license or regulate child care programs; that responsibility lies with the province.

The Government of Alberta

- Reports on federal funds in accordance with the reporting requirements for the [*Canada-Alberta Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*](#).

- Allocates provincial and federal funding into several key elements of child care, such as affordability grants, child care subsidies, wage top-ups and professional learning, and space creation.
- Ensures the safety, security, well-being, and development of the child is supported and preserved by implementing the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, including issuing and monitoring licensed child care.
- Supports the early learning and child care workforce by certifying and monitoring early childhood educators.

Why It Matters to Educators

- Federal–provincial agreements have supported lower parent fees, educator workforce supports, and other investments in Alberta's early learning and child care system.
- When federal and provincial governments renegotiate their agreements (usually every few years), educator voices and workforce data are important for shaping the next phase.
- AECEA shares Alberta educators' perspectives to help inform discussions about these agreements and the realities of working in child care.

How Decisions Are Made

Government policy development generally follows a structured cycle (see Figure 1: Government of Alberta Policy Cycle) that includes research, analysis, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.

1. **Issue Identification:** Ideas often start with government priorities, research findings, or feedback from the community, including input from AECEA and early childhood educators.
2. **Research and Analysis:** Policy staff gather data, analyze the issue, and explore its impacts to understand the problem thoroughly.
3. **Options Development:** Based on the analysis, policy staff develop possible solutions and assess their feasibility, costs, and benefits.
4. **Decision Making:** Senior leadership including the deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers, and ultimately the minister and Cabinet review the options and decide which ones move forward.
5. **Implementation:** Public service teams put approved plans into action through grants,

licensing changes, or program updates.

6. **Evaluation and Performance Measurement:** Once implemented, programs are monitored and evaluated to measure success and inform future improvements.

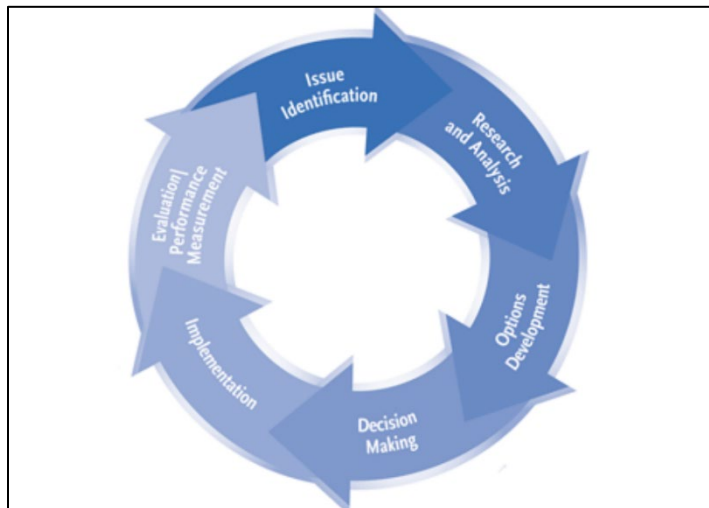


Figure 1: Government of Alberta Policy Cycle

Your Role as an ECE

- When you share your experiences and ideas through AECEA, government consultations, or other engagement opportunities, you provide valuable perspectives that can inform policy discussions and decision-making.

How Educators' Voices Reach Decision-Makers and Drive Change

Educators play a vital role in shaping early learning and child care policies. Your experiences and insights help government officials make informed decisions. Here is how your voice can reach decision-makers:

- **Through AECEA and other professional associations** that collect educator feedback and bring it to policy tables.
- **Advisory groups and consultations** organized by the government.
- **Community engagement or surveys** when new programs are being developed.
- **Direct communication** with your elected MLA or the Minister of Education and Childcare through letters, emails, or meetings.

There is no single way to participate. Educators can share their perspectives individually, collectively through organizations such as AECEA, or through government consultations and engagement opportunities. These different forms of participation help decision-makers understand how policies and programs affect educators, children, families, and communities.

Working Together for Impact

The ministry collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Government of Canada, other Government of Alberta ministries, Indigenous leaders and communities, community agencies, and sector partners to implement its mandate and child care initiatives across the province. Here is how you can stay involved:

- **Join AECEA:** AECEA meets regularly with ministry staff to bring forward member concerns and shares sector updates as they become available.
- **Stay informed:** Read updates from AECEA and the ministry website to know when consultations or changes are happening.
- **Share your perspective:** AECEA gathers educators' experiences and perspectives to help inform its work with government and the sector.
- **Connect locally:** Regional officers and licensing staff can explain how provincial policies apply in your community.
- **Stay engaged:** Participate in sector conversations as policies, programs, and priorities evolve.

Where to Go if You Have Questions

This section gives you practical places to go for answers depending on your question type.

Type of Question	Where to Go	How They Can Help
Licensing & regulations	Childcare Connect or your program's licensing officer childcareconnect@gov.ab.ca or 1-844-644-5165	Provides information about licensing requirements, standards, compliance, and your licensed program.
Wage top-up, professional development, release time, and employer contribution funding	Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program childcarefunding@gov.ab.ca	Clarifies eligibility, deadlines, and application procedures

WHO'S WHO IN ALBERTA'S CHILD CARE SYSTEM

Type of Question	Where to Go	How They Can Help
Certification or credential questions	Childcare Staff Certification Office ece.staffcertification@gov.ab.ca	Confirms requirements, process, and recognition for your ECE certification
Checking an educator's certification status	Early Childhood Educator Lookup	Verify the certification level and status of a certified early childhood educator in Alberta
Policy or provincial decisions	Your MLA or the Minister of Education and Childcare	Share your perspective and ask about provincial priorities
General questions about the profession, professional learning, or sector issues	AECEA	Basic information, guidance, and advocacy support for ECEs
General Government of Alberta child care questions	childcare@gov.ab.ca	General information about provincial child care programs and services

In Short: Government sets priorities and direction, while the ministry's public service develops and implements the policies, programs, and services that support Alberta's early learning and child care system. Early childhood educators can contribute their perspectives through AECEA, government consultations, direct communication with elected representatives, and other engagement opportunities.